

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 IO-03 NEA-06 INR-05 PM-03 DODE-00

NSC-05 NSCE-00 SAJ-01 L-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SCCT-01

CIAE-00 /051 W

----- 099265

R 281602Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7693

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 2767

LIMDIS

GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL

E.O. 11652: XGDS 1, FEB 1976

TAGS: PFOR, EG, UR, US, SY

SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN AND SYRIAN AMBASSADORS COMMENT ON SOVIET ME
POLICY

REF: A. BONN 3334; B. AMMAN 1430

1. SUMMARY. IN SEPARATE CONVERSATIONS WITH THE EGYPTIAN AND
SYRIAN AMBASSADORS FEBRUARY 27 BOTH APPROVINGLY EXPRESSED THE
VIEW THAT U.S. AND SOVIET THINKING ABOUT THE MIDDLE EAST
APPEARED TO BE CLOSER TOGETHER AFTER THE SECRETARY'S MEETING
WITH GROMYKO IN GENEVA. BOTH AMBASSADORS WERE UNUSUALLY
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FRIENDLY AND RELAXED. THEY TOOK AN UPBEAT LINE ON THE OUTLOOK

FOR THE SECRETARY'S UPCOMING MIDDLE EAST TRIP, AND THE SYRIAN MADE A POINT OF SAYING HE BELIEVED THE USSR HAD NOT RULED OUT PARTIAL AGREEMENTS IF THEY WERE TIED TO THE GENEVA CONFERENCE. THE SYRIAN ALSO SAID HE THOUGHT THE QUESTION OF THE PLO'S PARTICIPATION AT GENEVA COULD BE DEFERRED PROVIDING NO RE "CATAGORICAL REFUSAL" OF ULTIMATE PLO PARTICIPATION WERE MADE AT THE BEGINNING. END SUMMARY.

2. EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR ISMAIL CALLED ON ME FEBRUARY 27. HE DEVOTED MOST OF HIS REMARKS TO SOVIET-EGYPTIAN ECONOMIC TALKS CURRENTLY GOING ON IN MOSCOW (SEPTTEL), BUT HE HAD A FEW OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE GENERAL MIDDLE EAST SITUATION AND CURRENT SOVIET ATTITUDES TOWARD IT. ISMAIL SAID THAT FROM WHAT HE WAS HEARING IT APPEARED THAT U.S. AND POSITIONS ON THE ME HAD GROWN CLOSER AFTER THE SECRETARY'S GENEVA MEETING WITH GROMYKO. CLEARLY WELCOMING THIS DEVELOPMENT, ISMAIL EXPRESSED VIEW THAT IT EASED THE SITUATION. HE SAID IT NOW APPEARED THAT THERE WAS SOMETHING OF A CONSINSUS THAT NEW DISENGAGEMENT STEPS SHOULD BE TAKEN AND THEN MATTERS SHOULD MOVE TO GENEVA. IN CONTEXT OF REMARKS ON DISENGAGEMENT, THE AMBASSADOR ASKED WHAT I COULD SAY ABOUT SYRIA'S POSITION. I SAID THAT SECRETARY WOULD APPARENTLY BE VISITING DAMASCUS ON HIS TRIP TO THE ME FOR TALKS WITH THE SYRIANS. ISMAIL RESPONDED APPROVINGLY THAT THIS WAS GOOD BECAUSE THE SYRIANS UNDERSTANDABLY "WANT TO BE INCLUDED." HE ADDED THAT IT SEEMED THE SYRIANS WERE INTERESTED IN MAKING A DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT, BUT THIS MIGHT NOT COME BEFORE APRIL.

3. SYRIAN AMBASSADOR CHAYA, IN SEPARATE CONVERSATION ON SOCIAL OCCASION, ALSO EXPRESSED VIEW THAT THE SECRETARY'S MEETING WITH GROMYKO HAD BEEN USEFUL. THERE SEEMED, HE SAID, TO BE MORE UNDERSTANDING ON BOTH SIDES. THE SOVIETS HAD NOT RULED OUT PARTIAL AGREEMENTS "IF THESE ARE TIED TO THE GENEVA CONFERENCE." ON SYRIAN ATTITUDES, THE AMBASSADOR SPOKE VERY WARMLY ABOUT DISENGAGEMENT (AN UNUSUAL LINE FOR HIM). THESE AGREEMENTS, HE STRESSED, COULD BE VERY USEFUL BECAUSE THEY CAN LEAD TO GREATER CONFIDENCE BETWEEN THE PARTIES AND CAN HELP THE MEPC WORK BETTER ONCE IT CONVENES.

4. WHEN ASKED HIS VIEWS ON THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM AND
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MEPC, CHAYA SAID HE RECOGNIZED IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE TO HAVE PLO PARTICIPATION AT GENEVA FROM THE BEGINNING. THE MAIN THING, HOWEVER, WAS NOT TO GIVE AT THE OUTSET "ANY CATEGORICAL REFUSAL" ABOUT AN ULTIMATE PLO ROLE. THE QUESTION COULD BE DEFERRED, HE SAID, BUT IT WOULD BE NECESSARY TO THINK ABOUT WHAT PROGRESS WOULD INDUCE MOVEMENT IN THE PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI IMPASSE. ISRAEL WILL NOT DEAL WITH THE PLO NOW BECAUSE OF THE PLO'S REFUSAL TO RECOGNIZE ISRAEL.

BUT, CHAYA SAID, SOMEONE MUST MAKE THE FIRST MOVE, AND ISRAEL SHOULD MAKE THE FIRST STEP "TO RECOGNIZE THE PLO AS AN ENTITY." IN THIS REGARD, CHAYA NOTED ALLON'S RECENT REFERENCE IN DIE WELT TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PALESTINIANS AS A PEOPLE (REFTEL A) AND SAID THERE APPEARED TO BE SOME ENCOURAGING PROGRESS ON THE ISRAELI SIDE.

5. COMMENT: WE BELIEVE THAT BOTH TONE AND SUBSTANCE OF ABOVE REMARKS, GIVEN BY BOTH AMBASSADORS WITH WHAT SEEMED TO BE ALMOST A SENSE OF RELIEF, MAY CONFIRM THAT, FOR THE PRESENT AT LEAST, SOVIETS HAVE DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY PUT OUT THE WORD THAT MOSCOW DOES NOT OPPOSE THE SECRETARY'S CURRENT NEGOTIATING EFFORTS. IN THIS REGARD WE NOTE THAT REMARKS BY BOTH THE EGYPTIAN AND SYRIAN TEND TO CONFORM WITH REPORT ON CURRENT SOVIET THINKING BY MOROCCAN AMBASSADOR IN AMMAN (REFTEL B).
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, MISSION CHIEFS MEETINGS, PEACE TALKS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 FEB 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975MOSCOW02767
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: I
Film Number: D750072-0257
From: MOSCOW
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t1975023/aaaaacdi.tel
Line Count: 132
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: 75 BONN 3334, 75 AMMAN 1430
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <22 MAY 2003 by ifshinsr>; APPROVED <27 MAY 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: EGYPTIAN AND SYRIAN AMBASSADORS COMMENT ON SOVIET ME POLICY
TAGS: PFOR, EG, UR, US, SY
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006